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Towards a Normative Change Framework in Child Labour

Legitimacy, Social Norm, Procedural Norm

Alhassan Abdullah, Clifton R. Emery, Lucy P. Jordan

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Figure 2. Coding web tree on inheritance

Hard Work Standards

Narratives from the parents shows that involving children in cocoa and fishing helps to achieve the standards of hard work, which is cherished by all members of the community. According to them, it is important for children to be hard workers to facilitate their success in future. Engaging children in cocoa and fishing work enable children to contribute to family income and overcome the habit of laziness. Evidence from two parents showed that sometimes children are forced to work to achieve the normative standards of hard work:



Parents want their children to become hardworking. However, there are some children who would not work with the numerous training you give them. There are some children who need to be forced before they go to the farm. Children of this character would never take up the work of a farmer. They have portrayed right from the early stages that they are not interested.

X Parent 14 / Cocoa Community / Yes CL

It is known that if you train the child in the right way he would not grow to become a stubborn or lazy child. Therefore, if you always take them to the farm with you, there is no way they can stay behind and steal from someone.

► **Parent 1** / Cocoa Community / Yes CL

Taken children to the farm as a pathway to achieve the norm of hard work is perceived to have additional benefit of preventing them from engaging in social vices, such as stealing.

Additionally, some parents suggest that engaging children in the farm could have financial benefits and may prepare them to supervise the farm in the absence of their parents.

It is very true. I have already said this, if you do not teach the child the right things to do, they will grow to become lazy. However, if you teach them the skills they need in a farm, it will help them become hardworking. If you teach the child, they can go to the farm on days you are not around and make sure the farm is in good shape. In times where there is no money in the house, the child can assist others in their farm and earn money for themselves. So, I think it will be beneficial to teach your child in this sense.

► **Parent 13** / Cocoa Community / No CL

A parent reiterated argument about the norm of hard work by sharing his personal experience.

Let me use myself as an example; I never went to school but because I was engaged in farm work by my father, I have been able to work in it till now. I have been hard working and I have reaped the results of it. My eldest son is about 35 years and I cared for him with this same cocoa farm. I therefore agree that the involvement of children in the farm is to teach them the virtue of hard work. Under no circumstance can this be considered as wrong, farming has a great benefit to ourself and the community at large. With all our toil in the farm, we do so for our children.

► **Parent 3** / Cocoa Community / Yes CL


Commenting on exact practices that make children to become hard workers, a parent in the fishing community highlighted on some examples:

We all did same when we were kids. Those times we could even sit on a piece of wood and go fishing in the shallow waters. Some engage in this for some time and then they decide to join a fishing crew. They all contribute greatly to the training of a child to become hardworking.

► **Parent 14** / Fishing Community / Yes CL


Norms on Informal Apprenticeship

Training children to acquire the skills of farming and fishing were considered a normative obligation in the selected communities. Parents justified their act by highlighting the norms on informal apprenticeship training. They argued that traditionally children are required to obtain skills from their parents, in addition to the knowledge they will acquire from formal education. These informal skills are meant to provide alternative sources of livelihood for children. A retired fishmonger narrated how she started fishing at age six and the aspirations attached to the practice of involving children in fishing

 I have been a fisherman for a very long time. I began when I was a child around 6 years. I followed my father to the sea and engaged in fishing activities. When my father died, I continued his work due to the experience I gained from him. When I was into active fishing, I use to go Accra, Ivory Coast, and some other coastal areas for fishing. It is believed that once you learn all these skills, you might gain the opportunity to work in fishing harbors in Tema and Sekondi. Through those works you can end up in some of the European countries. There is no way a parent would want to violate the rights of their child. It is prudent to teach them fishing so that life will be easy for them in the future.

► **Stakeholder 2** / Fishing Community

It appears the aspirations of working in big harbors and the potential of travelling abroad through fishing has enforced the norms of informal apprenticeship training.

 ...Let me give you one example. There was a guy in this town who was taught by his father for so many years. He learnt how to mend fishing nets and how to repair boats when they get spoilt. He had an opportunity to work with one of the mechanized boats in Sekondi. One day the boat developed some fault on the sea, and they had to stop fishing and return to shore to fix it. However, with his skills, the guy was able to service the boat and as a results the whites took him to Spain. As we speak, he is a resident there and he has come for two of his brothers to join him there. So, when you teach your child fishing, it can help him in diverse ways.

► **Stakeholder 2** / Fishing Community

Another parent from the cocoa community has emphasized the rationale of making children to become great farmers and secure a better future for them through their participation in the cocoa work.

It is important for every parent who is a farmer to engage their children in farm work. This would aid the children to acquire some sort of skill and continue their work in the near future. There is nothing wrong with it... I am only teaching the child key practices in farming so that they would become great farmers in the future.

► **Parent 11** / Cocoa Community / Yes CL

Others argued that childhood is the best time for children to learn, hence engaging them at their childhood period will ensure that they acquire the skills with ease.

Narratives from two parents summarizes this justification.

At that stage of his life, they will be able to pick whatever you teach them. This would make them become more perfect in the skill when they grow up.

► **Parent 16** / Fishing Community / Yes CL

At first, parents did that to ensure that their children will learn from them so that in the near future, the children would have something better doing. They also had the vision that this would help their children cater well for their next generation. The same reason applies for most parents today. Most especially, the children are sent to the farm to learn how to plant certain cash crops.

► **Parent 14** / Cocoa Community / Yes CL

Due to their strong commitment to the norms on informal apprenticeship training, some parents expressed dissatisfaction with governments' education programmes to eradicate child labour.

At first everyone knew that they were brought up by farmers and they thought them the skill. However, these days we do not know what the government want to say. When we started, we use to follow our parents to the farm so that we will learn a skill and teach our children so that they will also teach their children in the near future. These days they say we must not take children to the farm. They even tell the children in school so most of them disobey their parents and do not follow them to the farm. I personally do not agree with the concept that children should not follow their parents to the farm. They only go there to help their parents; it is part of our culture we must understand that.

► **Parent 20** / Cocoa Community / Yes CL

Psychological Rewards and Sanctions

Evidence from the narratives revealed that the norms that motivate child labour practices are enforced by informal

sanctions including rewards. These sanctions are often psychological in the form of insult and praises. Parents who engage their children in child labour activities receive praises from their community members for instilling good social norms in the children. Whereas those who talk against child labour practices and the social norms that underpin them are insulted to ensure that they do not *set loose* the boundary of the norm. Narratives from a parent summarizes how praises are used to enforce the social norms:

When community members see my children accompany me to the farm, they mostly say that I have groomed my children very well. They commend the children that they are very helpful and hardworking.

► **Parent 12** / Cocoa Community / Yes CL

Community members who engage their children in child labour activities received praises for raising their children well and for maintaining the norm of hardwork.

Some other parents commented that these praises are needed to ensure that parents do their best for their children by engaging them in their work:

We need commendations to ensure that we teach the children the right ways. It is not wrong when we engage the children in the work. It is part of the training that children need to become successful.

► **Parent 10** / Fishing Community / Yes CL

The narratives showed that those who talked against the norms that support child labour activities often received insults from the community members on the basis that they are instigating children against the norms of the community. A parent narrated how she has stopped commenting on child labour situations due to the insults.

It is expected that, people around should react to such issues however, the behaviour of some parents deter most people from doing that. They will insult you and call you names if you dare questions why a parent is taking their child to the farm. Even if they themselves do not react to it, other community members will insult you. Some even say that, those who speak against sending children to the farm want to influence their children badly. If it wasn't for the behaviour of some parents, I would have taken it upon myself to advice such parents not to take their children to the farm when it is a school going day.

► **Parent 2** / Cocoa Community / No CL

It is evident that indeed insults as a sanctioning mechanism has succeeded in enforcing the norms on child labour as it has prevented some community members from talking against child labour activities in the community

Discussion and Implications

This study sought to unravel the normative underpinnings of child labour in the cocoa and fishing sector in Ghana and to tease out the procedural justification of the social norms. Specifically, the study aimed at 1) identifying the social norms that underpin child labour in cocoa and fishing, 2) the constitutive procedural norms that are used to justify child labour and 3) the situational sanctions that are used to enforce child labour norms. Findings from the bottom-up practice research and vignette-based narrative interviews adds to the body of research on child labour. It draws attention to the required intervention measures needed to shift and change either the constituted social norms or the constitutive procedural norms.

Evidence from the narratives show that parents in the cocoa and fishing communities (including the community stakeholders) are motivated by the norms of inheriting family business to involve their children in child labour. It is commonly sanctioned in these communities that the cocoa and fishing occupations are family business which are meant to be passed on to younger generations. Families are obliged to teach at least one child of the family to ensure that they can inherit the family occupation. Busquet et al.s' (2021) study within the cocoa chain in west Africa revealed that cocoa is regarded as a family occupation and families are obliged to ensure that the next generation farmers are trained to assume the responsibility. Findings from this study show that there is an informal rule that guide parents to teach at least one child within the family the occupation of the family, cocoa farming. It appears that the benefits of teaching the children goes beyond maintaining the norms on inheriting family business, as it emerged that parents use the training as a security for old age and means to increase of family income. The notion of children contributing to family income, through child labour related activities, has been reported in previous studies in South Africa (Bray, 2003), Tajikistan (Akilova, 2017) and come communities in the Ashanti region-Ghana (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018a, 2019)

The uest to maintain the legacy, and identity and to secure the boundaries of the family farmland were identified as the constitutive procedural norms that are used to justify

the child labour norms on inheriting family business. Narratives from the parents and community stakeholders has shown that cocoa and fishing occupations symbolizes families based on the sizes of their farms and annual harvest. Hence, it is obligatory for generations to maintain such reputation, esteem and legacies of the family by training children in the right way to develop interest and the culture of to succeed the farm. Whilst, this procedural justification appears unique within the literature it confirm the notion that social norms that underpin child labour activities are deep rooted and within the social order of communities (Abdullah et al., 2022). Children who trained by their parents are considered as “fortunate” and “cherished” to be chosen to succeed the family legacy. The norms of inheritance is also justified by the quest to maintain the boundary of the farm. Teaching children to know and maintain the boundary of the farms helps to prevent litigations when their parents die. Indeed, some evidence suggest that parents are sometimes scared that their children could be cheated (Krauss, 2017) and their farms will collapse if their children are not trained to take over (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018b; Busquet et al., 2021). Our study has revealed that these normative expectations are enforced by the constitutive norms of maintaining the boundary of the farms to ensure smooth transition and passage to their children. A large body of research has documented land litigation issues among the core environmental challenges in Ghana (Boateng & Bawole, 2021; Lanz et al., 2018; Obeng-Odoom, 2016). Hence, the justification by the parents has empirical basis, though illegitimate within the legal order.

The study’s findings indicate that parents are motivated by the norms of hard work to engage their children in child labour. Raising children who are hardworkers is a cherished social value and expected activity from parents in the community. The quest to achieve this social norm informed most the decision by parents` to engage their children in cocoa and sea fishing at their early stages. Verna (2000) revealed that engaging children in child labour as a pathway to make them hardworkers is normatively justified in most traditional communities. Others have shown that when children are prepared to become hardworkers, through training in the farm, they are more likely to develop resilient techniques to challenges that may confront them in their adulthood (Adonteng-Kissi, 2021; Bahar, 2014; Busquet et al., 2021). Findings from this study has further showed that the norm of hard work through child labour activities is justified by the constitutive norms of preventing child

involvement in social vices and increasing family income. It is commonly accepted that children may engage in deviant activities, such as stealing, when they are left alone in the house without no one supervising them. Hence, sending them to the farm, to cultivate the habit of hard work is justified, especially as a pathway to achieve sanctioned social norm. Engaging children in work at their early ages is considered as accepted pathway to make them hardworkers according to evidence from Turkish study (Bahar, 2014).

It was also found that norms on informal apprenticeship training motivate child labour practices in the cocoa and fishing industry in Ghana. Having the skills and knowledge in cocoa and fishing, or the primary occupations of parents, is considered a core training children need from the family. Socialization and training of children in the occupations of parents has been reported among the key precursors to child labour in Ghana (Abdullah et al., 2022; Adonteng-Kissi, 2018a; Busquet et al., 2021). Findings from this study confirm that this notion is predominant in the Ghanaian fishing and cocoa sector. The cultural norm of informal apprenticeship training has been supported by the empirical realities, which serves as strong constitutive procedures. For example, a participant in this study report that she was motivated by the fact that some children who engaged in the fishing industry had the opportunity to work in big harbors and travelled abroad. These realities enforced the norms of informal apprenticeship training as it has entrenched the relevance of the norm. Like (Bahar, 2014) in Turkey, and (Busquet et al., 2021) in Côte D’Ivoire, findings from this study has confirmed that the norm of informal apprenticeship training for children is justified by the constitutive rationale that children learn better and faster. Parents in this study affirmed that children “*pick whatever you teach them*”, hence childhood period is the best time to inculcate good morals in children. Rationale for the norm of informal apprenticeship has been supported by narratives from parents, community stakeholders and child victims of child labour (see Adonteng-Kissi, 2018a; Bahar, 2014; Berlan, 2013; Busquet et al., 2021). They learn better and become creative when they are taught at their early stages (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018b). The norm of informal apprenticeship training is also justified by the constitute normative rationale that children need to develop alternative skills aside education as part of their training. These alternative skills are needed to guarantee their success. For parents in this study, these normative justification are solidified by the empirical realities of unemployment in Ghana. They

believe that training the children to obtain an alternative skill in fishing or farming will provide them with alternative sources of income and a guarantee for their success.

Previous studies have documented that for social norms to be sustained it has to be enforced through the process of institutionalization and situational sanctions (Gould, 2018; Parsons, 1937). Bequele & Boyden (1988) reports stigma among the situational sanctions that are used to enforce norms that regulate child labour. Parents who fail to engage their children in child labour are stigmatized in their respective communities. Findings from this study show that rewards, in the form of praises, for engaging children in cocoa and fishing is a key sanction mechanism. Parents who engaged their children in cocoa and fishing works received praises from their neighbors and community members for undertaken legitimate measures to ensure the success of their children. The praises, which strengthen the norms on informal apprenticeship training, is perceived as a legitimate action that is required to motivate parents to continue. Negative sanctions, in the form of insults, are often meted on people who argue against parents involving their children in fishing and cocoa. The narratives show that these insults often succeed in deterring neighbors from commenting about the activities of child labour. In the "Rules" Durkheim (1982) argues that these situational sanctions, herein insults, are meant to enforce the boundary of the norms (herein child labour norms), even among those who have not violated the norm. It is reasonable to argue that parents who receive insults for talking against acts of child labor will be deterred from making similar comments. Similarly, parents who witness these acts of insults on other parents would also be deterred from making comments against the involvement of children in child labour activities. According to parents in this study those who talk against activities of child labour do not want the success of the children; they want them to become lazy and bad children.

Recommendation: Linking the Findings to the Normative Framework

The findings emphasize the influence of social norms in child labour within the cocoa and fishing sector in Ghana. It revealed both the constituted social norms and the constitutive procedural justifications for engaging

children in child labour as a pathway to satisfy the norm. The evidence has several implications, in terms of the measures that are required to address the normative underpinnings. Compared to the normative framework, it can be safely argued that some of the constituted social norms, such as norms on inheritance and hardwork, are justified even within the legal order. Parents are expected to document how their properties would be shared among their children and relatives through legal will. Which is legitimate. However, the act of involving children as well as the procedural justification that perceives fishing and occupation as family business and legacies to be inherited, has no place in the legal order. It contravenes the legal expectations on inheritance. Hence, we propose that a normative change programme should be implemented to target at changing procedural constitutive norms that are negative and develop positive procedural pathways to achieve social norms that are legitimate. If such measures are developed successfully, positively constituted social norms will be maintained but the negative procedural norms, uses child labour as foundation to satisfy the constituted norms would be respecified.

Practically, we recommend that there is the need for an urgent commercializing drive within the child labour hubs. When the cocoa and fishing sector is largely commercialized it will change the orientation of parents. A commercial cocoa farm will require highly skilled people to work in, which children will be an exception. Also, the commercialization drive will necessitate that parents register their fishing business and farms. Which will mean that the norm of maintaining boundaries for smooth transition will be eliminated, since there will be proper documentation on the farm. The commercialization drive will also require that to be successful farmers will require high level of education in agriculture. This demand may influence them to motivate their children to pursue higher education in order to meet the skills requirements to be successful within the farm or fishing. On this basis, we further recommend the need to develop technical and vocational training institutions in these child labour hubs. This will ensure that children receive the needed skilled educational training to function in the commercial businesses. Further, we suggest that a two prong educational intervention should be developed: 1) bottom-up community sensitization, and 2) curriculum education. A bottom-up community sensitization should be carried out using the stakeholders of the fishing and cocoa farming, example, retired farmers/fishmongers and

assemblymen. It appears that the community members are likely to listen to these informal authorities based on their legitimacy and esteem as experienced and respected people in the community. Whilst doing that, a curriculum-based education should be designed to break the intergenerational cycle of the norms. For instance, a course on child labour and social vices, should be included into the educational curricula to ensure that children do not learn the negative social norms and traditional practices that support child labour activities.

Limitations

Some limitations apply to the study. Although the vignette approach facilitated the interviews and helped to open discussions on the norms, it has a downside. It has the tendency of shifting the attention of the participants towards the cases which block their mind from reflecting on other issues that are relevant but not highlighted in the vignettes. This risk may have been minimized in this study through the follow-up in-depth semi structured interviews. Also, though we selected participants from four child labour hubs, statistically it cannot be a complete representation of the child labour hubs in Ghana. Similarly, the sample size of 50 participants is considered adequate for an in-depth qualitative study, but not enough to draw statistical generalization from the study. In-depth analytical generalization is however possible due to the depth of information collected.

Conclusion

The cultural and normative underpinnings of child labour have received traction and increased attention within research, policy and the practice space. This research project sought to understand the social norms that underpin child labour within major child labor hubs (cocoa and fishing sector) in Ghana. Drawing from a normative framework that has been developed, the study revealed both the constituted social norms and the constitutive procedural norms that support child labour practices. Based on the evidence provided by 50 participants (including 40 parents and 10 community stakeholders) the study proposes practical solutions including a normative behavioral campaigns to change or respecify the constitutive norms, as a pathway to curtail the negative child labour norms. The model on normative change framework provides a useful framework that can guide interventions globally to address the normative drivers of child labour practices.

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Contact details
Alhassan Abdullah
Email: aalhassa@connect.hku.hk
T: +852 62178147

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 7239
E: @ilo.org